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## **Environment Department to Begin Update of State Surface Water Quality Standards**

(Santa Fe, NM) — The New Mexico Environment Department's (NMED) Surface Water Quality Bureau will begin the process of updating the state's surface water quality standards Tuesday in Santa Fe. The New Mexico Water Quality Control Commission (WQCC) will begin to consider proposed amendments to the state's surface water standards at a public hearing to begin at **9 am in the Paisano Building's Cactus Room, 2968 Rodeo Park West, Second Floor, Santa Fe.**

New Mexico's surface water quality standards define the goals for a waterbody by designating its uses, setting criteria to protect those uses, and establishing provisions to protect water quality from pollution. In order to keep these standards up to date, the federal Clean Water Act mandates that they be reexamined every three years. This process, to begin Tuesday, is called the triennial review.

The hearing will begin on **Tuesday, February 24<sup>th</sup>, 2004** and continue for subsequent days as necessary.

Several proposed amendments will be considered by the WQCC. These include an NMED proposal to decouple the state's definition of "surface waters" from the federal one. This move follows attempts by the Bush Administration to narrow the definition and therefore exempt certain surface waters from Clean Water Act protection. Other petitioners will also be proposing amendments at the hearing. These include Amigos Bravos, the University of California, San Juan Water Commission, Elephant Butte Irrigation District and Los Placitas Association.

Members of the general public are invited to attend and are welcome to present non-technical testimony each day the hearing continues at 11:30 am. Public comment will also be taken the evenings of February 24 and 25 from 6:30 to 7 pm in the auditorium of the Harold Runnels Building, 1190 St. Francis Drive, Santa Fe.

For further information contact Jon Goldstein, Communications Director, NMED at (505) 827-0314.

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